

**REPORT OF THE
VIRGINIA INSTITUTE OF MARINE SCIENCE**

**Recurrent Flooding Study
for Tidewater Virginia
(SJR 76, 2012)**

**TO THE GOVERNOR AND
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA**



SENATE DOCUMENT NO. 3

**COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
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Section 2.6: Findings and Recommendations

Findings:

1. Recurrent flooding is a significant issue in Virginia coastal localities and one which is predicted to become worse over reasonable planning horizons (20-50 years).
2. The risks associated with recurrent flooding are not the same throughout all areas of Tidewater Virginia.
3. Data is often lacking for comprehensive and/or fine resolution analysis of flood risk in the region.
4. Review of global flood and sea level rise management strategies suggest that it is possible for Virginia to have an effective response to increasing flood issues BUT it takes time (20-30 years) to effectively plan and implement many of the adaptation strategies

Recommendations:

1. Given the long time frame necessary to effectively address recurrent flooding and sea level rise issues and given the speed at which risks are projected to increase, Virginia and its coastal localities should immediately begin comprehensive and coordinated planning efforts.
2. The State should initiate identification, collection and analysis of data needed to support effective planning for response to recurrent flooding issues in Virginia.
3. The State should take a lead role in addressing recurrent flooding in Virginia for the following reasons:
 - a. Accessing relevant federal resources for planning and mitigation may be enhanced through state mediation.
 - b. Flooding problems are linked to water bodies and therefore often transcend locality boundaries.
 - c. Resource prioritization efforts will require consistent or standardized assessment protocols across all localities and regions.
 - d. Localities do not feel enabled to address all flooding and sea level rise issues.
4. The State should request an expert review of local government legal authority to address current and projected flooding risks and what levels of evidence are likely to be required to justify locality action. The State should then enact any enabling authority needed to allow localities to address current and projected flooding issues.
5. The State should develop a comprehensive strategy for addressing recurrent flooding issues throughout Tidewater Virginia.

- a. Part of that strategy should include prioritization of areas for flood management actions based (in part) on risk
- b. Detailed studies should be done of prioritized areas to determine:
 - i. Potential adaptation strategies appropriate to the area
 - ii. Implementation feasibility of identified strategies
 - iii. Cost/benefit of identified strategies